

Message Text

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41

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 CU-02 OMB-01 ACDA-05 /066 W

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R 261017Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4307

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE COLOMBO 718

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJECT: PM ALLEGES BANK ROBBERY-INSURGENCY LINK

1. PRESS REPORTS THAT BANK ROBBERY IN COLOMBO SUBURB FEBRUARY 11 HAS BEEN LINKED BY PRIME MINISTER TO FAR-LEFT INSURRECTIONISTS. PM REPORTEDLY ALLEGED AT FEBRUARY 24 CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENT AGENTS THAT SIX ROBBERS- INCLUDING ONE UNIVERSITY LECTURER AND TWO UNDERGRADUATES-INTENDED TO USE STOLEN 600,000 RUPEES (50,000) TO ACQUIRE PRINTING PRESS FOR RADICAL PROPAGANDA.

2. PM ALSO SPECULATED THAT THIS THEFT WAS LINKED WITH SPATE OF RECENT ROBBERIES OF VILLAGE COOPERATIVE STORES' DAILY COLLECTIONS.

3. PM'S EVIDENCE APPARENTLY COMES FROM STATEMENTS GIVEN BY SUSPECTS PICKED UP IN CONNECTION WITH ROBBERY. THOSE SUSPECTS STILL AT LARGE ARE SAID TO INCLUDE ONE WHO HAD BEEN TAKEN INTO CUSTODY FOR INVOLVEMENT IN 1971 INSURGENCY BUT LATER RELEASED. POLICE SOURCES APPEAR TO AGREE THAT BANK ROBBERY WAS CARRIED OUT BY POLITICAL DISSIDENTS SEEKING FUNDING FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES.

4. THESE CHARGES AGAINST WHAT PRESS DESCRIBED AS
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"ORGANIZED UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT" ARE PARTICULARLY
NOTEWORTHY BECAUSE THEY ARE REMINISCENT OF MODUS

OPERANDI OF APRIL 1971 INSURGENTS WHO FINANCED
INSURRECTION BY SERIES OF BANK THEFTS. PM CITED
SAME PATTERN EMERGING NOW.

5. EARLIER PRESS ARTICLE REPORTED THAT ARMS,
AMMUNITION, AND "INFLAMMATORY LITERATURE" HAD BEEN
DISCOVERED SOON AFTER ROBBERY AT SUSPECTS' FARM
NEAR COLOMBO. MONTHLY NEWSPAPER IS CREDITED TO
SAME GROUP. WE HAVE NOT SEEN ANY ISSUE BEING SOLD SINCE
ROBBERY.

6. COMMENT: PM'S COMMENTS POINTUP FACT THAT GSL
CONTINUES TO BE WARY OF RENEWED INSURGENT
ACTIVITY AND IS KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON ANY SUSPICIOUS
DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS FIELD.
VAN HOLLEN

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Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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